



United States Department of Agriculture

# Terwilliger Fire Information

## November 15, 2018

### Background

On Sunday, Aug. 19, 2018, an eight acre fire was reported at 3:21 p.m. near Terwilliger Hot Springs. The fire grew quickly to 110 acres by that evening, jumping Cougar Reservoir. Exceptionally dry conditions led to the fire's quick growth. Aggressive firefighting action was undertaken due to numerous values at risk in the area. The Forest Service and the Oregon Department of Forestry promptly responded with firefighting resources including hand crews, engines and aircraft. Southwest Area Type 2 Incident Management Team #3 announced that the fire burned through the Terwilliger (Cougar) Hot Springs. The fire is 80% contained with an estimated acreage of 11,555.

### Damages

The fire burned both sides of Forest Service Road 19 (FSR 19) and through the Terwilliger (Cougar) Hot Springs. Hazards include rocks, unstable slopes, snags and other hazard trees that pose risks to firefighter and public safety. Hazards mitigation is needed before public access/use. These hazards will likely keep a section of Road 19 and the hot springs closed well into 2019 in order to provide long-term public safety. Many trees surrounding the Rider Creek Trail #3319 and the hot springs were killed as a result of the fire and are now considered hazardous. These trees have imminent risk of falling and present hazards. Rider Creek Trail #3319 and the restrooms at the springs will need to be completing reconstructed. The wooden railings along the trail were destroyed and will need to be replaced. The kiosk and other structures sustained damage and will need to be replaced or repaired. Hazardous trees that present a danger to roads or recreation areas will be cut down and may be removed (salvaged). Updates on the condition of the springs and the open/closed status will be posted at <https://go.usa.gov/xPGj6>. Burn severity maps can be found at <https://go.usa.gov/xPGjF>. Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) @willamettenf for up-to-date information.

### Hot Springs Overview

- ⇒ Soaking in hot springs is a very popular and sought out activity in Oregon. Willamette National Forest has five hot springs destinations: Terwilliger (Cougar) Hot Springs, Belknap (a private, developed springs), Breitenbush (a private, developed springs), McCredie Hot Springs (undeveloped), and Deer Creek Hot Springs (undeveloped).
- ⇒ Terwilliger Hot Springs, known more commonly as Cougar Hot Springs is often voted one of the best hot springs in Oregon.
- ⇒ Thousands of people from all over the state and beyond come to soak in the tiered soaking pools hidden in the forest near Cougar Reservoir along the McKenzie River.



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- ⇒ Thousands of people from all over the state and beyond come to soak in the tiered soaking pools hidden in the forest near Cougar Reservoir along the McKenzie River.
- ⇒ Four, clothing-optional, soaking pools are spaced apart by rock walls laid out in steps down a ravine. Temperatures range from 85 degrees in the lower pool to 112 degrees in the upper pool. The pools are 3-12 feet across and an average of 2-3 feet deep. The pools' floors are mostly bedrock, but some gravel, sand, and debris remain at the bottom of the pool.
- ⇒ The springs are located off Aufderheide Scenic Byway (FSR 19), 55 miles or about a 1+ hour drive from Eugene, OR. The ¼-mile Rider Creek Trail leads visitors to the hot springs
- ⇒ The hot springs are operated by American Land and Leisure (AL&L). An \$8 per person daily fee is charged and includes access to the hot springs, trail, lagoon, and parking lot. Annual passes also are available. The fees help pay for cleaning and maintenance of the site.
- ⇒ The area is day use only, open dawn to dusk, seven days a week. AL&L closes and cleans the springs each Thursday from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- ⇒ The hot springs are open year round as long as Aufderheide Scenic Byway (FSR 19) is not blocked by snow.

### History

- ⇒ The Willamette National Forest history files show that on March 12, 1906, H. Terwilliger filed a lode claim to [the] well-known South Fork Hot Springs, claiming to have a ledge of cinnabar. Rangers believe [the] claim is merely a subterfuge to secure patent [title] to [the] hot springs for [a] summer resort.
- ⇒ A 1912 Forest Service map of the old Cascade National Forest shows a Terwilliger mining claim was located at the springs. The mining claim was denied by the government on the grounds that the mineral claim was merely a ploy to open a resort much like nearby Belknap and Foley Springs.
- ⇒ Larry Clemenson, a fire lookout on Indian Ridge in 1925 and 1926, wrote that: Smith Taylor knew about them [the hot Springs and] Smith said he named them 'Terwilliger' (Clemenson, 1972).



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### History continued

- ⇒ In early 1927, the Forest Service offered to let any qualified developer propose a site development plan for the hot springs. The desired development included a main hotel building with lobby, dining room, kitchen and at least ten bedrooms; at least five cottages; a store with campers supplies; restrooms for the general public; a concrete swimming pool; septic tank sewage system; electric lighting plant; bridge; trail; and a 232 public campground.
- ⇒ From 1927 to 1930, A.J. Jacobs, Dr. W.W. Elgin, M.C. Davis, and A.C. Nelson of the Terwilliger Hot Springs, Inc., held a Forest Service special use permit for a resort near the springs, but it was never developed.
- ⇒ Hiram Terwilliger (1840-1918), born in Vernon, Ohio, was the son of James and Sophronia Ann (Hurd) Terwilliger. The Terwilliger family was among the first settlers of New York State and Hiram's great-grandmother owned a large tract of land at the site of New York City. James Terwilliger (1809-1892), Sophronia and five children came to Oregon by wagon train in 1845, in a journey that took six months. Sophronia died before reaching Western Oregon. James built the first house and established a blacksmith shop that was the first business in Portland.
- ⇒ In 1847, James married Mrs. Palinda Green. They took a Donation Land Claim in South Portland in 1850. Hiram was five years old on the journey to Oregon.
- ⇒ In 1862, Hiram went to Idaho to seek his fortune in gold, but he soon returned to Oregon and engaged in a variety of business ventures including working in a logging camp. He married Mary Edwards in 1869 and they had four children James, Joseph, Charlotte, and Virtue (Gaston, 1911).
- ⇒ In the 1970s-1990s, this area was filled with hundreds of people camping near the springs. The area was proliferated with large parties, violence, littering, drug and alcohol abuse, and more.
- ⇒ In 1998, the Willamette National Forest implemented new rules to make the area safer and to preserve the special quality of this popular and high use area. Terwilliger Hot Springs was designated as a day-use only area. An alcohol ban was implemented and glass containers were not allowed.
- ⇒ Under Forest Order 18-2013-01-03, implemented in 2013, camping was restricted to developed campgrounds in the Cougar Recreation Area. The order placed camping restrictions on a 1/2-mile strip on either side of FSR 19 from Hwy 126 to Forest Service Road 1927 (FSR 1927) as well as Terwilliger Hot Springs, Hidden Lake Day Use Area, areas surrounding Delta Campground, Slide Creek Campground, and Echo/East Fork Day Use and Boat Ramp.



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### Top Pool Closures

- ⇒ In April 2014, a large rock and debris fell into the top pool from the hillside above the pool, nearly striking a visitor, prompting a closure of the top pool due to public safety concerns.
- ⇒ In October 2015, the first phase of work began to stabilize the hillside behind the top pool. It included removing the older shelter, closing the man-made cave, and removing a portion of the vertical failure area.
- ⇒ In October 2016, the second phase of work to stabilize the hillside behind the top pool began. The work included building additional rock support to the hillside above the pool and completing drainage work.
- ⇒ In May 2018, the final phase to stabilize the hillside was completed.

### Aufderheide Scenic Byway (Forest Service Road 19)

- ⇒ FSR19 is part of the 220 mile West Cascades Scenic Byway, which runs north to south, skirting the northern half of Oregon's Cascade Mountain Range. The road connects Highways 126 (McKenzie River) and 58 (Oakridge), winding through the lush undergrowth of the majestic Willamette National Forest and meandering along the cold, clear waters of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers.
- ⇒ The road is popular for scenic drives, cyclists, and hikers. Many popular recreation sites are located along the route, including Cougar Reservoir and Terwilliger (Cougar) Hot Springs.

### Aufderheide Scenic Byway (Forest Service Road 19) Closures

- ⇒ In August 2017, a large stretch of Aufderheide Drive was closed due to fires in the Horse Creek Complex. The road reopened Oct. 14, 2017.
- ⇒ On Dec. 27, 2017, a landslide blocked all access to the hot springs from Hwy 126. The road from Hwy 58 was blocked by snow for a few months, limiting access to the springs. On July 27, 2018, the landslide debris was cleared and Aufderheide Drive reopened. Visitors could again access the hot springs from Hwy 126.
- ⇒ Due to hazardous conditions, on Sept. 3, 2018, fire managers decided to close FSR 19 to all traffic.

### Media Contacts

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